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SUPPLEMENT

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[REDACTED] note: The unofficial conversations which took place in Bangkok [REDACTED] between Free Lao leaders and Baron Patrick Surcouf, former Resident of Southern Laos, have been previously reported. Following is a brief account of these conversations prepared by [REDACTED]

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The first appointment with Mr. Surcouf was at ten o'clock. He seemed sincere and frank and was very polite. We began speaking of friends and relatives in Laos. He gave us news of our family, of Vientiane, of Paksé and of Khong. H.H. Souphanavong related how the Lao nationalist movement arose:

The coup of 9 March 1945

The French resistance in Laos,

The Lao support of this resistance,

My relations with Tiao Boun Oum and Captain Dumonnet

Mistakes of the French upon the defeat of Japan: Colonel

Imfeld at Luang Prabang, Cdt. Bichelot at Xg Khouang,

Cdt. Favre at Vientiane.

We decided that the fault of the French lay in having failed to contact H.H. Tiao Maha-Ouparat, President of the Council of Ministers of the Royal Laos government, at the end of the war.

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[REDACTED] note: H.H. Tiao Maha-Ouparat is a title meaning 'Second in command'; it refers to Chao Petsarath.)

We spoke of the part H.H. Tiao Savang played in these misunderstandings. Mr. Surcouf tried to show that we have the Japanese, Viets and Siamese behind our movement. We made the point that we have only the people behind us; we have no help from the Japanese, Viets and Thais. I added that I have received arms from the Allies, not Japanese arms - nothing but French, English and American guns.

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We placed the expulsion of our popular movement at the time of the downfall of H.H. Tiao Maha-Ouparat

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We brought out that H.H. Tiao Maha-Ouparat stayed out of the movement and remained faithful to the King.

I commented that at Savannakhet I contacted the French (Lt. [REDACTED] who spent two days and nights at my house. On 17 September 1945 they attacked us; we lost 17 persons (dead?). That happened because the French didn't want to listen to reason and wanted to disarm us. If they had been willing to form a bloc with us and fight against their enemies (alleged), the Viets, nothing would have happened.

I entered Thakhek 8 September 1945 and was attacked by the French 9 September 1945. It was the signal for bloodshed. Our despair at waiting for some understanding on the part of the French stems from that moment.

Mr. Surcouf deplored this situation, this misunderstanding which had such disastrous results. He seemed very sincere and told us we were right. Nevertheless he reproached us for being too impatient and quick-tempered. We should have had the patience to wait for true French friends and speak to them. He reproached us for not having greatness of soul and taking into consideration the fact that these actions of these French soldiers showed they were fools.

We left the meeting at 1325; Mr. Surcouf handed us the modus vivendi. We think he recognized: 1) The errors made by the French military, 2) the war ended too quickly; better men couldn't be sent to us. He ignores all the bad things about the French. He seems to judge other Frenchmen by himself. He believes we owe them so many things; without France we wouldn't be what we are.

2. [REDACTED] The meeting began at 9:15 A.M. Mr. Surcouf asked us to tell him what we want. H.H. Souphanavong started by asking him to take into account the atmosphere in which the note had been drawn up and to make exception for some few rare friends who really understand us.

The note we sent the Allies was read. Mr. Surcouf noted a little exaggeration in this report, which was judged too severe, but he did recognize some truths. He said France decided a long time ago to grant what the Laos ask. The working agreement signed recently was prepared a long time ago and wasn't influenced by recent events. Independence is beautiful, and Mr. Surcouf agreed we should have it, but he questioned if we could exist and fight against outside dangers and civil war. He stated the main thing we wanted is granted in the modus vivendi, but the details didn't suit us. He said we have a basis of understanding; it is necessary to have an agreement between Franco and the Laos. This cleared the way to show different documents and read different letters which bear witness to our willingness to understand and make ourselves understood.

The document on Prince Savang was read.

In regard to the return of the four provinces, he asked us not to provoke incidents, stating this would be dealt with by the Royal Laos government. We explained to him we were not doing anything and this issue had nothing to do with us. He asked us if the Viets or the Thais would provoke incidents. We couldn't confirm this because we think it is to be feared the Thais might suddenly attack.

We asked him to envisage the agreement between us before the transfer of these provinces; he said it was difficult.

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Mr. Surcouf offered us material aid during this period of transition to prove to us we are not being ignored. He could ask that money be sent to us, for example, either through the Laos government or through our relatives. We thanked him but refused this help; stating that if our relatives wanted to help us, this would be a personal matter. He said he would be glad to do something for us to make our exile easier. We thanked him and told him we are able to take of ourselves because we were all working and were ready to continue if necessary. He asked us to give him the names of our relatives and some information on family relationships between us and people in Laos. We offered to give him copies of certain documents and the report.

The meeting adjourned approximately 1300. We had the impression he had been won over to our cause and that our conference had generally been fruitful. He has begun to understand us and understand all the mistakes of the French. We had gone to see him with the feeling there might be an argument. Nothing of this sort occurred; he listened to us attentively, even when we told him things that were not very complimentary to the French. He tried to understand and he understood. He is truly frank, honest and sincere, worth of respect. I pin many hopes on him.

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3. [REDACTED] We arrived at the meeting at 9:00. An attempt was made to reconstruct the facts and actions before and after the Japanese coup of 9 March 1945.

Reconstruction of things that happened after Japan's defeat:

Chain of events during the days 11 and 12 October 1945.

Formation of the Nationalist Government. Mr. Surcouf made notes of the names and titles of participants.

It was specified H.H. Tiao Maha-Ouparat did not join the movement.

Reconstruction of the events at Luang Prabang: dethronement of the King, guardianship of Prince Savang; recognition of the constitution and the government by H.M. Sisavangvong.

Re-enthronement of the King.

Declaration of the King of not having signed agreements with representatives of France or other powers.

Flight of Colonel Imfeld from Luang Prabang.

The battles of Savannakhet, Thakhek, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Houei-say and the approximate dates of their loss.

Family relations between us and the Laotians now in Laos.

Refusal of the Royal Family to send a representative with the French resistance.

We left at 1200 with friendly wishes and drank to the good results of future talks.

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I formed the opinion that the Franco-Laos menage is like newlyweds who quarrel and, after a reconciliation, love each other more than before.

4. Personal Impressions: Mr. Surcouf appears to be very sincere, frank and honest, but he is still the French colonial, perhaps very polite and well brought up. He has an indescribable hatred for the Viets. He despises the Kmers and dislikes the Thais. He wants to help us as far as possible, but he is certain we are too weak and we could not govern ourselves. He underestimates us. We can expect something from him, but not all we want.

When we speak to him of the Union Francaise instead of the Federation, he explains that we gain by the Federation and without it we couldn't get along.

On the subject of the Union Francaise he said that.... if you depend directly on France, there will be financiers, speculators who will do exactly as they please. That would be very unfortunate. It would be necessary to have an Indochinese organism to adapt everything that comes from the mother country in Indochina.

It was at that moment I had the definite impression that he is very colonial; it is people of his sort who made colonial expansion. This impression cut down some of my hopes and lowered my opinion of him.

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5. Conversation with Mme. Germaine Krull, [REDACTED]

Mme. Krull is French by birth. She married a Dutchman, but she is now a widow. She was a military correspondent in the Allied Armies. She seems to be very sympathetic toward nationalistic movements, but she is still a Frenchwoman. She deplores what French colonials have done; that is what put them against her. This is also the reason she is in Bangkok rather than in Indo China.

When I told her we have a lot of faith in the intervention of Mr. Surcouf, who seems to be very frank, sincere and understanding, she said, "Be careful, Mr. Surcouf is just as dangerous as he is polite and proper to you. He is said to be the Bon Colonial made for the colonies. He has said that the young Laotians are too ambitious, they know nothing of life and claim to have unlimited freedom. What they ought to have now is a little freedom of administration - a good condition with a reasonable balance with which they could keep up a feeling of well-being and that's all... The emancipation of the colonial races is certain and inevitable. Later on they, the young ones, will even govern the whites, but we have to prolong this situation as long as it is possible for us to do so, that is to say, before being their boys, they have to be our boys as long as possible".

Mr. Surcouf is also supposed to have said that the Laotians and the Annamites are so pretentious that they don't even want the status of a Dominion.

Mme. Krull told me not to be simple and put too much faith in him. He is the Grand Colonial of the type of Pavie and others who could never visualize the loss of the colonies which are the basis of their very existence.

I was firmly convinced that Mme. Krull is right and could be telling the truth.

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